

## The Socratic Method

Concept: Student Rights

Objective: Students will clarify their thinking about rights they possess.

Q: Thomas Jefferson, in the Declaration of Independence stated that all men have certain “inalienable rights” and that “among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”. Inalienable means that these rights cannot be transferred to anyone else. What is a right?

A: A guaranteed claim or privilege in life

Q: How is it guaranteed?

A: It is accepted by society.

Q: How do they do that?

A: Through law or common agreement

Q: What rights are guaranteed?

A: Life, liberty, pursuit of happiness

Q: How is your right to life guaranteed?

A: We have laws against murder.

Q: How does the law guarantee your right to life?

A: It punishes those who commit the crime.

Q: What constitutes life?

A: The processes that allow me to live – breathing, eating, sleeping, good health

Q: Does the government guarantee you the right to breathe?

A: Yes.

Q: Does anything ever get in the way of that right?

A: Yes. Pollution

Q: What does the government do when the right is violated?

A: They cite someone for violating the law.

Q: Does the right to life extend beyond the fundamental processes necessary to be alive?

A: Yes. It is more than being connected to a life sustaining device in a hospital. It implies a certain quality of life.

Q: What is meant by “quality of life”

A: It is a standard deemed acceptable by society.

Q: What kinds of things make for quality in life?

A: Freedom to choose and to grow and develop

Q: What choices do you have that are part of this quality of life?

A: Friends, clothing, what I want to do in life.

Q: Does anything ever get in the way of those choices?

A: Yes, sometimes I have to do what my parents or teachers tell me.

Q: Why do you have to do that?

A: Because they are responsible for me.

Q: Why?

A: Because they are older and have more experience.

Q: Do others who are older and have more experience have more rights than you?

A: Yes.

Q: What rights do they have that you don't?

A: The right to go where they want and do what they want, as long as they don't hurt anyone.

Q: What rights do you have at school?

A: The right to learn, to choose my friends.

Q: How do you exercise your right to learn?

A: I do the assignments that my teacher gives me.

Q: Do you get to choose what to learn or what assignment to do?

A: Sometimes, but not usually.

Q: Why is that?

A: Because the teacher has been hired to do that.

Q: Do you have any input about those things?

A: Not really.

Q: Is this because you don't enough to know what to do?

A: Probably, but not always.

Q: Are you learning all you can, or all you want to?

A: Probably not.

Q: Why?

A: Because there are too many rules about things. I can't really explore everything I want to. I always have to meet the requirements of the teacher.

Q: Are all teachers good?

A: No

Q: But you still have to do what they tell you?

A: Yes

Q: How do you feel about that?

A: I wish it were better, but I really can't do anything about it.

Q: Does this affect the quality of your life?

A: Yes.

Q: Should something be done about it?

A: Yes, but I don't know what.

Q: Are you powerless?

A: No. I suppose that if enough students were upset about it, that they could change things.

Q: How would that happen?

A: We could protest, or talk to our parents or something.

Q: Do you have the right to do that?

A: I don't know.

Q: What rights do you think you ought to have to insure the quality of your life in the school?